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Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Report by the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report contains information on the effective implementation of international human rights instruments, and focuses on the meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and the first inter-committee meeting on the methods of work of treaty bodies relating to reporting. The report also makes reference to the proposals of the Secretary-General on reporting under human rights treaty bodies in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for change" (A/57/387), which calls for a report from the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this issue, to be submitted by September 2003.

* The submission of this report was delayed in order to include the most recent suggestions concerning reporting under international instruments on human rights.

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1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/90 of 4 December 2000, entitled "Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights", requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-seventh session on measures taken to implement the resolution, on obstacles to its implementation and on measures taken or planned to ensure financing and adequate staff and information resources for the effective operation of the human rights treaty bodies.

2. Information relevant to resolution 55/90 is contained in the report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-eighth session (E/CN.4/2002/110) concerning the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights, which was prepared pursuant to Commission resolution 2000/75 of 26 April 2000. Further information is contained in the reports on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/57/38);[1] the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/57/295); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/57/334); and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (A/57/400).

3. Developments concerning the programme to support human rights organs and treaty bodies; efforts made by the human rights treaty bodies to improve their functioning; the need to ensure financing and adequate staff and information resources for the operations of the human rights treaty bodies; cooperation with United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and mechanisms, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations; relations with the Expanded Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights; States parties; and cooperation with special rapporteurs, representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory service programme were addressed by the thirteenth and fourteenth meetings of human rights treaty bodies held at Geneva from 18 to 22 June 2001 and from 24 to 26 June 2002, respectively. The reports on those meetings, including the recommendations of the chairpersons, were submitted to the General Assembly on 5 February[2] and 11 September 2002.[3]

4. At their thirteenth meeting, in June 2001, the chairpersons recommended that a meeting of representatives of all treaty bodies be convened to consider the subject of methods of work and reservations to the human rights treaties. That meeting, the first inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, was held at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva from 26 to 28 June 2002, immediately following the fourteenth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. The report of the meeting, including its recommendations, will be contained in document HRI/ICM/2002/3.

5. The functioning of the treaty bodies has been considered, inter alia, by the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring system, whose final report was submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session (E/CN.4/1997/74). Comments on the report of the independent expert by Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and interested

persons are compiled in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session (E/CN.4/2000/98 and Add.1).

6. In his report of 9 September 2002 entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), the Secretary-General drew attention to the final report of the independent expert and noted "the growing complexity of the human rights machinery and the corresponding burden of reporting obligations [which] strain the resources of Member States and the Secretariat". He suggested that the "committees should craft a more coordinated approach to their activities and standardize their varied reporting requirements", and that "each State should be allowed to produce a single report summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties to which it is a party" (ibid., paras. 52 and 54).

7. The Secretary-General has requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to consult with treaty bodies on new, streamlined reporting procedures. The report of the High Commissioner, containing recommendations which will fully address the issues raised by the General Assembly in resolution 55/90, will be submitted to the Secretary-General by September 2003.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38) (to be issued).

[2] A/57/56.

[3] A/57/399.